

Tom Horne  
Superintendent

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## ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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### **HORNE: STUDENT PROTESTS NOT O.K. DURING SCHOOL YEAR**

PHOENIX (Friday April 27, 2007) -- State schools superintendent Tom Horne today reiterated his position that Arizona's public school students have the constitutionally protected right to protest, but must refrain from doing so while school is in session. Horne issued his remarks in light of news reports indicating "a planned May 1 immigration march will duplicate the route from last year's massive event." As you may remember, last year, a number of students played hooky from school, either to participate in last year's march or to use the march as an excuse.

"Protesting is a precious constitutional right, and participating in protests has great educational benefits for young people. However, this should be done after school hours. Students have the right to express their opinions. They also have a responsibility to take advantage of their opportunity for a classroom education," Horne said.

Horne continued, "Since I took office, we have placed a renewed emphasis on academics and rigor. To succeed in today's economy muscle power is no longer sufficient. Academic brain power is now needed to obtain a decent job. Students must take their academic work seriously during the school day, and should participate in political life after school."

"I support the position of those schools that have committed to ensuring that discipline will be applied to students who play hooky. Students must learn the lesson that actions have consequences," Horne concluded.

Horne has sent a letter to all superintendents, charter schools, and principals, a copy of which is attached. It urges them to send out letters to discourage students from playing hooky from school. It attaches an example, a letter by Dr. Raj K. Chopra, Superintendent of the Phoenix Union High School District, as a model letter. That letter stated in part,

This week, many of our campuses have experienced students leaving campus to protest immigration issues. The District does not support student walkouts, and

we have informed students that there are disciplinary as well as academic consequences to this behavior. Leaving campus unexcused is cutting class, and is disruptive to our schools.

Parents, you must also impress upon your children that walking away from the very institution that accepts all children regardless of race, religion or national origin, and helps students realize their hopes and dreams, sends a very negative message.

While public protest is a right of Americans, leaving campus and missing school will not be excused as it is a disruption to the education process.

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[Click here to view memorandum from Superintendent Horne to school administrators.](#)

[Click here to view sample letter to parents.](#)